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ABSTRACT

A survey gathered information on salaries, working conditions, benefits, and turnover of early childhood providers in Rhode Island. The sample was drawn from 30 percent of the state's full-day care centers, part-day nursery schools, after-school programs, prekindergarten programs attached to elementary schools, and home day care providers. All eight of the state's Head Start programs were surveyed. A total of 96 center-based programs and 151 home day care providers received questionnaires. Response rate was 88 percent for centers and 60 percent for home providers. A total of 826 teachers, assistants, directors, and home providers were represented. Findings indicate that Rhode Island's early childhood providers are undercompensated for their skills, receive inadequate benefits, and are leaving the field for better-paying positions. Turnover is unacceptably high. In light of the tremendous growth in demand for child care services, these findings describe a service profession in crisis. More revenue must be drawn into the profession, primarily to improve compensation and working conditions. It is concluded that solutions will require a broad coalition of parents who use early childhood programs, persons who work in the programs, employers, and policymakers. A summary of the report is appended. (RH)

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RHODE ISLAND CHILD CARE SALARY STUDY - 1989

Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children

Submitted to:

The Rhode Island Workforce 2000 Council
August 30, 1989

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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I. INTRODUCTION

In response to the growing concerns of day care directors about staff recruitment and retention and to the questions raised in the public policy arena about adequate compensation of day care staff, the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children conducted a survey of child care providers in April 1989. Funded by a grant from the Rhode Island Workforce 2000 Council, the purpose of the survey was to gather information on salaries, working conditions, benefits and turnover of early childhood providers in Rhode Island.

A stratified sample was drawn from the following types of programs: full-day care centers, part-day nursery schools, Head Start, after school programs, pre-kindergarten programs attached to elementary schools and home day care providers. A thirty percent sample of each of the above programs was selected using a table of random numbers. All of the eight Head Start programs in the state were surveyed.

The survey used for center-based programs was purchased from the Child Care Employee Project in California which is gathering information on a national scale. A modified version of the instrument was mailed to home day care providers.

Ninety-six center-based programs and 151 home day care providers received questionnaires.[1] The response rate for center-based programs was 88%; response among home day care providers was 60%. Both rates are excellent for surveys of this nature and allow a comfortable level of confidence that the results reported for the sample can be extrapolated to the larger population of centers and providers.

A total of 826 teachers, assistants, directors and home providers are represented in the results of the survey.

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[1]For purposes of analysis, the pre-kindergarten programs attached to elementary schools were eliminated due to poor response (only 3 of the 11 programs returned surveys).

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II. FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS

The child care workforce in Rhode Island is predominantly female (98%) and white/caucasian (88%). Minority representation is slightly higher among assistants both in centers and in homes than among teachers or day care providers.

Child care workers are also fairly young. Forty percent of the center-based teachers and 60% of the assistants are under 30 years old. Home providers tend to be older: 84% are 30 years or older.

SALARIES

A. Center-Based Staff

Salaries displayed below reflect the average starting hourly wage as well as the highest hourly wages currently offered to teachers, assistants, teacher-directors and directors in each program type.

SALARIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD STAFF

	(n)[2]	Starting		Highest	
		Average	Range	Average	Range
Teachers					
After School	(8)	$ 7.22	$ 6.00 - 10.00	$ 7.55	$ 6.50 - 10.00
Day Care	(36)	$ 6.69	$ 4.50 - 10.00	$ 8.03	$ 5.35 - 13.00
Head Start	(8)	$ 6.94	$ 6.05 - 8.00	$ 9.15	$ 7.00 - 13.60
Nursery	(16)	$ 7.80	$ 5.00 - 12.00	$ 9.30	$ 5.00 - 15.00
ALL PROGRAMS	(68)	$ 7.03		$ 8.41	
Assistants					
After School	(10)	$ 4.92	$ 4.00 - 6.25	$ 5.20	$ 4.50 - 6.75
Day Care	(36)	$ 4.78	$ 4.00 - 7.00	$ 5.77	$ 4.25 - 7.75
Head Start	(8)	$ 4.92	$ 4.04 - 5.44	$ 6.29	$ 5.15 - 7.85
Nursery	(15)	$ 4.92	$ 4.00 - 7.10	$ 6.28	$ 4.00 - 10.00
ALL PROGRAMS	(69)	$ 4.84		$ 5.87	
Teacher-Directors					
After School	(4)	$ 7.23	$ 6.00 - 8.00	$ 7.85	$ 7.00 - 8.50
Day Care	(17)	$ 8.34	$ 3.00 - 12.00	$10.08	$ 7.00 - 14.00
Head Start	(3)	$ 8.57	$ 7.74 - 10.00	$ 9.19	$ 8.50 - 10.00
Nursery	(11)	$ 9.78	$ 6.00 - 14.00	$10.95	$ 6.00 - 18.00
ALL PROGRAMS	(35)	$ 8.66		$10.02	
Directors					
After School	(6)	$ 9.85	$ 8.40 - 12.00	$10.99	$10.24 - 13.00
Day Care	(20)	$ 9.54	$ 7.00 - 19.00	$10.43	$ 5.00 - 19.00
Head Start	(8)	$10.75	$ 8.00 - 12.50	$13.34	$10.71 - 15.33
Nursery	(4)	$11.13	$ 8.40 - 15.00	$11.97	$10.00 - 17.00
ALL PROGRAMS	(38)	$10.02		$11.29	

[2]The results reflect the actual responses received for each type of program and are not weighted by the number of individuals holding a position in that particular category. Therefore, the figures represent the average wage for positions by type of program, not an average for the individuals employed in those positions.

NOTE: These averages are not recommended levels of compensation for day care workers. In order to keep parent costs down, early childhood professionals have subsidized the true cost of care by accepting lower salaries. Therefore this report is not intended to be used as a new baseline for salary contracts, but as baseline information by which progress toward adequate compensation of early childhood professionals can be measured.

Salaries of nursery school and Head Start employees are higher which may be due in part to the fact that both the nursery schools and Head Start suffer less turnover and have more senior staff than the other centers (see section on TURNOVER below). Nursery school starting salaries are also slightly higher which may explain their ability to attract and retain staff. The Head Start program, whose starting salaries are not very different from day care centers, offers a better benefits package which extends the base starting salary (see discussion of BENEFITS below).

Several directors wrote of the frustration of not being able to improve salaries and benefits. Typical of the comments was: "Can't compete with public school salaries and benefits under present funding constraints" and "Due to low salary issue more staff are looking for other career opportunities (i.e., elementary school teaching positions, etc.)."

Unable to use the data collected on prekindergarten programs connected to elementary schools, we turned to a listing of public school salaries[3] for a rough estimate of the entry level salaries of prekindergarten public school teachers. In 1988-89, the annual median entry level salary for teachers with a bachelor's degree only was $18,417.

Both the Department of Education in its regulations governing private nursery schools and the Department of Children and Their Families which license day care programs require that head teachers in each of the programs hold an early childhood certificate (which requires a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood education), or have a bachelor's degree with extensive coursework in early childhood education. Thus, training prerequisites for entry level public school teachers and head teachers in private programs are equivalent. Yet starting base salaries are not. Calculating an hourly rate for public school teachers by dividing the annual salary into 42 weeks (length of the school year), and seven hour days, the median hourly salary for entry level public school teachers was $12.53. The median starting hourly salary for teachers in private programs was $ 7.00.

National data show a similar discrepancy. A recently published study looked at the annual salaries for early childhood education teachers at NAEYC

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[3]Teacher Negotiations Data 1988-89. Rhode Island Association of School Committees, 1988.

accredited centers[4] and found that they were about half that paid to public elementary school teachers in each of the nation's four regions. "We found that the average salary for early childhood education teachers with at least bachelor's degrees was about $14,530, whereas the estimated salary for public school teachers with 6.4 years of experience (the average for early childhood education teachers in our survey) was about $21,500. In addition salaries of public elementary school teachers generally increased at a greater rate with years of experience than did salaries of early childhood education teachers with bachelor's degrees."[5]

According to statistics compiled by the Rhode Island Department of Employment Security in the last year[6], child care teachers earning the highest salaries listed above make less per hour than senior level automotive mechanics ($14.45), stock clerks ($11.63), cooks ($10.64), truck drivers ($10.45) bakers ($9.94) and secretaries ($9.57). Child care assistants at the highest salary make less than janitors ($9.25), service station attendants ($8.75), gardeners/groundskeepers ($8.55) and receptionists ($8.33).

The starting salary at Rhode Island's McDonald's Restaurants is $5.00-5.50 an hour depending on shift. Good quality child care facilities which need trained and experienced providers are in direct competition with lower-skilled service occupations. It is not difficult to see why recruitment and retention of day care staff is cited as a major problem for directors.

B. Home Providers

Most family day care providers reported their weekly earnings rather than hourly rate. The average gross weekly income was $215.00. The maximum reported was $630.00 and the minimum $60.00. The wide range is most likely due to the fact that some day care homes provide only part-time care or take in fewer than the six children (or eight with an assistant) allowed. Almost all homes operate five days a week for ten hours a day. Calculating an equivalent hourly rate for day care providers based on their work week and the average weekly earnings listed above, the average hourly rate for family day care providers is $4.30.

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[4]The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) provides the only national voluntary accreditation system for early childhood education centers and schools; its accreditation standards were developed to identify quality programs.

[5]Early Childhood Education: Information on Costs and Services at High-Quality Centers. Fact Sheet for the Chairman, Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate. U.S. General Accounting Office, July 1989.

[6]RI Department of Employment Security, Rhode Island Wage Survey for Selected Service Occupations, December 1988; Rhode Island Wage Survey for Selected Transportation, Communications and Public Utilities Occupations, April 1989; and Rhode Island Wage Survey for Selected Wholesale and Retail Occupations, June 1989.

Typical among comments from home providers were:

"I don't mind the long hours. I just wish I was better compensated for it."

"For the hours involved in day care there is not enough money for salaries let alone the ability to provide benefits or paid vacations or sick leaves."

Home day care assistants received wages ranging from $2.50/hour to $5.00/hour with an average of $4.44.[7]

BENEFITS

All Head Start teaching staff receive paid holidays as do almost all day care teachers (97%) and assistants (80%). However only 50% of teachers and 40% of assistants in after school programs receive paid holidays. More than half of the assistants and teachers in nursery schools (53% and 68% respectively), receive paid holidays. Thirty-nine percent of family day care providers do not charge for holidays.

Roughly the same pattern exists for paid vacations except among nursery schools where 58% of the teachers and 67% of the assistants receive no paid vacations. This could be due to the fact that many nursery schools follow the regular school calendar and are not open during the summer. Paid vacations for those who receive them range from 5 to 21 days, often based on length of service. Few home providers include vacation pay in parent fees; 87% of home providers have no paid vacation time.

Sick leave is provided to 94% of teachers in day care but to only 71% of the assistants. The same holds true for nursery schools. Seventy-four percent of teachers are given sick leave but only 60% of the assistants receive any. Among after school staff only 33% of both teachers and assistants receive any sick leave. Comments made on the questionnaires suggest that sick leave is only given to full-time employees. Many assistants and after school staff are hired part-time. Head Start was the only program which offered sick leave to all of its teachers and assistants. The great majority (83%) of home providers do not charge for days they take off due to illness.

Benefits are tabulated below displaying the percentage of staff, both teachers and assistants by category of program, who receive benefits.

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[7]Based on nine responses for 15 providers who have assistants.

BENEFITS

	After School	Day Care	Head Start	Nursery Part-Day	Home Provider
Full Health Coverage	35%	55%	88%	6%	6%
Dental Coverage	5%	22%	50%	-0-	-0-
Sick Leave	33%	83%	100%	70%	17%
Paid Vacations	44%	88%	100%	34%	13%
Paid Holidays	45%	88%	100%	62%	61%
Pension Plan	10%	32%	38%	9%	3%
Life Insurance	16%	27%	25%	-0-	11%
Paid Maternity Leave	6%	16%	13%	-0-	-0-

Other measures of the quality of the work environment are non-monetary policies. The table below describes elements which contribute to the working conditions of teachers and assistants.

WORKING CONDITIONS

	After School	Day Care	Head Start	Nursery Part-Day	Home Provider
Paid breaks	20%	82%	88%	29%	31%
Paid preparation/ planning time	75%	76%	100%	47%	44%
Paid release time for off-site training, workshops, etc.	30%	49%	100%	39%	5%
Formal grievance procedure	20%	66%	94%	32%	NA
Written contract	68%	27%	13%	29%	61%
Yearly cost/living increases in wages	44%	45%	88%	68%	28%
Compensation for overtime	32%	90%	63%	46%	49%

Head Start has the strongest benefits package and it is the only program that is federally subsidized. While some day care programs and home providers receive public funds (i.e., through state subsidies for low-income children and the Child Care Food Program), for the majority these funds constitute less than 50% of the total revenues. The smallest programs have the most difficult time providing benefits. One respondent openly complained in response to questions on benefits: "There just isn't money."

TURNOVER

A. Center-Based Staff

Juxtaposing the turnover rate with the salary and benefits information for each type of program provides an interesting correlation. Turnover was calculated by dividing the number of teachers and assistants reported to have left in the last 12 months by the number of teachers and assistants on the payroll.

TURNOVER FOR CENTER-BASED STAFF

	Teachers	Assistants	Total
After School	35%	57%	43%
Day Care	25%	37%	32%
Head Start	15%	19%	17%
Nursery	14%	31%	20%

Turnover among after school and day care centers was highest. Assistants left in greater numbers than teachers in all categories. Day care centers lost a full quarter of their teachers in the past year. After school programs suffered the highest turnover rate of assistants. Head Start had the lowest turnover rate. While the nursery schools also had a low teacher turnover rate, a sizeable number of assistants left the programs. Rhode Island seems to follow the national pattern, experiencing highest turnover where salaries are lowest.

The most commonly cited reasons for leaving were strikingly similar across all types of programs: dissatisfaction with the pay and benefits, accepted a job unrelated to the early childhood services, accepted a job in an elementary school or in another early childhood program, and returned to school (more than half in a field unrelated to early childhood).

The effect of turnover is also seen in staff seniority. Those centers with the highest turnover rates, suffer the consequence of a relatively young and inexperienced staff. Eighty-eight percent of the child care staff in after school programs has been employed with the program for less than two years. Seventy-five percent of day care employees has less than two years experience at the center. In contrast, the majority of Head Start and nursery school staff have been with the programs for at least two years. Thirty-seven percent of the teachers in nursery schools, as compared to 15% of the teachers in day care centers, have taught in the same program for more than five years. Teaching in day care centers does not seem to be an attractive career choice.

When asked to rank the severity of staffing issues, responses varied by category of program. Results listed below are the percentage of respondents in each category who ranked the severity of the problem as "major" or "a problem." (Other choices were "minor" or "not a problem.")

PROBLEMS IN CENTERS

	Retaining Staff	Finding Subs	Filling teaching vacancies	Finding trained staff	Securing training resources
After School	80%	78%	75%	89%	30%
Day Care	58%	78%	70%	84%	62%
Nursery	26%	37%	37%	42%	21%
Head Start	75%	88%	88%	88%	25%

The results are startlingly clear. Programs are struggling to recruit and retain staff. Even nursery schools who are less troubled with retaining staff indicate some difficulty in finding trained staff.

Years of research have shown that an essential element of high quality early childhood programs is the quality of the staff. One of the most important things in a young child's life is having the consistent care of people who have grown to know and understand that child. This is impossible to accomplish when teachers and caregivers change so frequently.

B. Home Providers

It was not possible to calculate a turnover rate among home providers. Of the 151 questionnaires mailed, twenty-two were returned by persons who said they were no longer providers. The reasons they listed for discontinuing child care service were identical to those above with the addition of: found working conditions unsatisfactory and the work too stressful.

The retention rate among home providers was comparatively high. Forty-three percent had been providers for over five years. Only 23% were providers for less than two years. Retention among providers' assistants was much lower. Sixty-four percent had worked with the provider for less than two years. None had been with a provider for over five years. Eighteen percent of the assistants were under 20 years of age.

Home providers cited as their major problems "low pay" and "long hours."

The difficulty of finding and retaining trained staff comes at a time when the demand for child care services is growing. In Rhode Island the number of fully licensed day care centers grew from 153 in June 1988 to 190 as of August 1, 1989. Several programs still await full licensing. Fully certified family

day care homes increased from 468 in June 1988 to 528 as of August 1989. This count does not include homes caring for fewer than four children which do not require certification. The Department of Children and Their Families predicts that the number of both centers and homes seeking licensing will continue to grow over the next several years.[8]

At the national level the Bureau of Labor projections for the year 2000 show a 20% increase in demand for child care workers and a 36% increase for preschool teachers.[9]

PARENT FEES: THE MARKET COST OF CARE

The survey included questions about weekly fees charged to parents for child care. While the question asked for average full-time equivalent fees only, some providers gave part-time or subsidized fee information. In order to minimize errors in interpretation, two tables are provided distinguishing full-time programs from known part-day ones. Readers are still cautioned to remember that the numbers may reflect some part-time charges and may therefore be artificially low.

WEEKLY FULL-TIME PARENT FEES[10]

	Day Care Centers		Home Providers	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
Infants	$109.38	$ 80.00 - 142.00	$ 79.86	$ 50.00 - 120.00
Toddlers	$ 95.66	$ 22.00 - 142.00	$ 72.28	$ 20.00 - 110.00
Preschool	$ 71.40	$ 40.00 - 115.00	$ 71.00	$ 40.00 - 100.00
Kindergarten	$ 64.81	$ 40.00 - 95.00	$ 57.60	$ 15.00 - 100.00
After School	$ 39.20	$ 25.00 - 55.00	$ 46.07	$ 5.00 - 100.00

WEEKLY PART-TIME PARENT FEES

	After School Programs		Nursery Schools	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
Preschoolers	NA		$ 26.91	$ 10.50 - 75.00
Kindergarten	$ 38.75	$ 25.00 - 75.00	$ 27.50	$ 12.00 - 45.00
After School	$ 27.10	$ 18.00 - 55.00	$ 29.00	$ 17.00 - 45.00

[8]Source: Telephone conversation with Licensing Unit, Department of Children and Their Families, August 1988.

[9]The Crisis is Real: Demographics on the Problems of Recruiting and Retaining Early Childhood Staff by Barbara Willer and Lynn C. Johnson, NAEYC, 1989.

[10]Head Start programs are not included since half of the programs reported that they do not charge parents fees.

More research needs to be done on the actual cost of day care vis-a-vis the market rate (i.e., the rate parents are charged). The current market rate is heavily subsidized by providers who are accepting low wages and minimal or no benefits.

An annual cost of day care for Rhode Island parents was calculated by multiplying the average weekly rate in day care centers by 50 weeks for year-round care of infants, toddlers and preschoolers. We estimate that the average annual cost of day care for RI parents is $5,469 for infants, $4,783 for toddlers and $3,570 for preschoolers. For a single mother earning less than $15,000, the infant fee alone represents more than one-third (36%) of her annual gross salary.

In a recent Harris poll (April 1989), of parents' concerns about child-care arrangements, almost all parents (97%) identified the quality aspects of a program ("quality of staff," "reliability of staff," and "effect on child's morale and security"), as more important than affordability or hours of operation.[11] Yet, the most significant obstacle to dealing with the staffing crisis is that it costs more money to pay teachers adequately than many parents can afford. It is estimated that two-thirds of all women in the workforce are either the sole support of their families or married to men who make less than $15,000 a year. Poorer families spend disproportionately higher percentages of their income on child care than wealthier people do. Simply raising fees across the board is clearly not the answer.

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[11]Source: The Philip Morris Companies, Inc. Family Survey II: Child Care, A Survey of Public Concerns About the State of Children, Existing Child-Care Systems, and the Need for Action. Conducted by Louis Harris Associates, New York, 1989.

III. SUMMARY

As the data indicate, Rhode Island is not exempt from the staffing crisis afflicting most of the nation. Rhode Island early childhood providers are undercompensated for their skills, receive inadequate benefits and are leaving the field for better paying positions. Turnover is unacceptably high given the needs of young children for consistent and stable relationships with trained and experienced care givers. These data combined with the tremendous growth in demand for child care services describe a service profession in crisis.

Basic assumptions which underlie the need for adequate compensation of day care providers are key to understanding the urgency with which the issue must be addressed. These are[12]:

a) High quality early childhood programs are in the best interest of the general public since they help children become competent learners and good citizens, reduce later school failure, and allow parents to work.

b) The turnover within the current early childhood workforce threatens program quality and therefore the public's interest.

c) The greatest barriers to creating a trained and stable workforce of providers are the low compensation, low status and poor working conditions pervasive in early childhood programs.

d) Compensation for individuals working in early childhood programs must be commensurate with their skills and qualifications and reflect the importance and responsibilities of the work performed.

e) A sufficient supply of high quality early childhood programs cannot exist until persons who work in them are no longer forced to subsidize program costs by accepting inappropriate wages and working conditions.

f) Certain families can and must pay more for early childhood programs. But many families will be unable to afford the full cost of quality programs.

It is clear that more revenue must be drawn into the field, with its primary target being the improvement of compensation and working conditions for persons who work in early childhood programs. This will require increases in public and private funding for families who are struggling with day care costs and the programs serving them.

Solutions will demand a broad coalition of parents who use early childhood programs, the persons who work in these programs, employers and policy makers. Hopefully this report will provide a base for exploring initiatives that begin to address the compensation issue. The quality of Rhode Island's future workforce depends on resolution of the staffing crisis in child care services within this century.

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[12]Based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children's statement on "Quality, Compensation, and Affordability in Early Childhood Programs," 1988.

RHODE ISLAND CHILD CARE SALARY STUDY - 1989

Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children

In response to the growing concerns about staff recruitment and retention, the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children conducted a survey of child care providers in April 1989. Funded by a grant from the Rhode Island Workforce 2000 Council, the purpose of the survey was to gather information on salaries, working conditions, benefits and turnover of the child care providers who serve Rhode Island's children and their families.

A stratified sample was drawn from a variety of child care programs including family day care homes. The survey used for center-based programs was purchased from the Child Care Employee Project in California. A modified version of this instrument was distributed to home day care providers. A total of 826 teachers, assistants, directors and home providers are represented in the results of the survey.

FINDINGS

Demographics

The child care workforce in Rhode Island is predominantly female (98%) and white/caucasian (88%). Minority representation is slightly higher at the assistant, rather than the teacher level, in both centers and homes.

Child care workers are also fairly young. Forty percent (40%) of the center-based teachers and 60% of the assistants are under 30 years old. Home providers tend to be older: 84% are 30 years or older.

Salaries

Salaries displayed below reflect the average starting hourly wage as well as the highest hourly wages currently offered to teachers, assistants, teacher-directors and directors in each program type.

Salaries of nursery school and Head Start employees are higher which may be due in part to the fact that both the nursery schools and Head Start suffer less turnover and have more senior staff than the other centers (see section on **Turnover** below).

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	Starting		Highest	
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***NOTE:** These averages are not recommended levels of compensation for day care workers. This report is not intended to be used as a new baseline for salary contracts, but as baseline information by which progress toward adequate compensation of early childhood professionals can be measured.*

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Nursery school starting salaries are also slightly higher which may explain their ability to attract and retain staff. Head Start programs, where starting salaries are not very different from day care centers, offer a better benefits package which extends the base starting salary (see discussion of Benefits below).

Most family day care providers reported their weekly earnings rather than hourly rate. The average gross weekly income was $215.00. The maximum reported was $630.00 and the minimum $60.00. The wide range is most likely due to the fact that some day care homes provide only part-time care or take in fewer than the six children (or eight with an assistant) allowed. Almost all homes operate five days a week for ten hours a day. Calculating an equivalent hourly rate for day care providers based on their work week and the average weekly earnings listed above, the average hourly rate for family day care providers is $4.30.

In 1988-89, the annual median entry level salary for RI teachers with only a bachelor's degree was $18,417. Calculating an hourly rate for public school teachers by dividing the annual salary into 42 weeks (length of the school year), and seven hour days, the median hourly salary for entry level public school teachers was $12.53. The median starting hourly salary for teachers in private programs with the same degree requirement and responsibilities as public preschool teachers was $ 7.00.

According to statistics compiled by the Rhode Island Department of Employment Security in the last year, child care teachers earning the highest salaries listed above make less per hour than senior level automotive mechanics ($14.45), stock clerks ($11.63), cooks ($10.64), truck drivers ($10.45) bakers ($9.94) and secretaries ($9.57). Child care assistants at the highest salary make less than janitors ($9.25), service station attendants ($8.75), gardeners/groundskeepers ($8.55) and receptionists ($8.33).

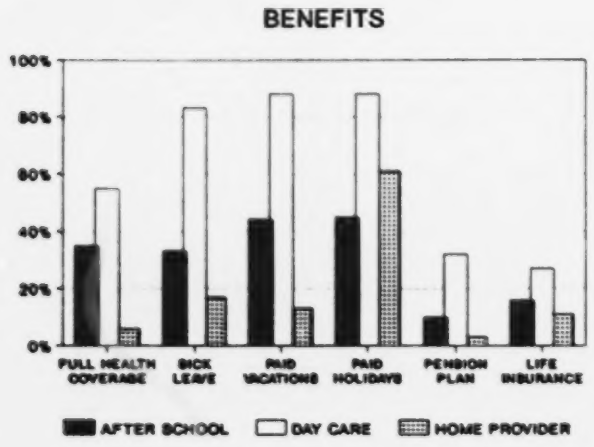
The starting salary at Rhode Island's McDonald's Restaurants is $5.00-5.50 an hour depending on shift. Good quality child care facilities which need trained and experienced providers are in direct competition with lower-skilled service occupations. It is not difficult to see why recruitment and retention of day care staff is cited as a major problem for directors.

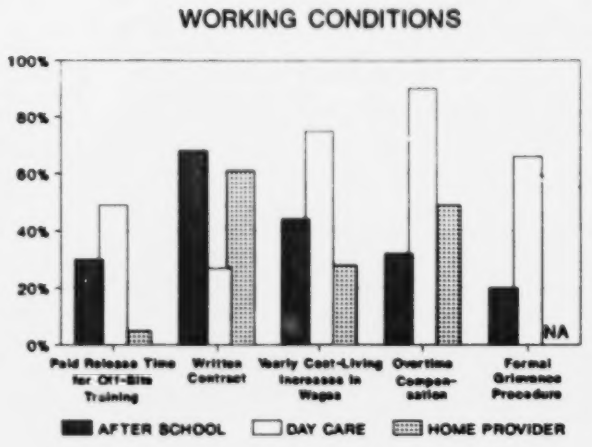
Benefits

Benefits are a major way of extending base salaries and are important in retaining staff. In general teachers have better benefits than assistants either because they earn more or because many assistants are hired part-time.

After school programs in Rhode Island offer few benefits. Similarly home providers can afford few benefits. Head Start, a federally funded program, offers the best benefit package.

Sick leave is more readily provided to teachers than to assistants. Paid vacations for those who receive





them range from 5 to 21 days and are often based on length of service. Few home providers include sick leave or vacation pay in their parent fees.

Turnover

Years of research have shown that an essential element of high quality early childhood programs is the quality of the staff. One of the most important factors in a young child's development is having the consistent care of people who have grown to know and understand the child. This is impossible to accomplish when teachers and caregivers change frequently.

Turnover in Rhode Island is unacceptably high for programs serving young children. Turnover among after school programs last year was 43% and in day care centers, 32%. Assistants left in greater numbers than teachers in all programs. Day care centers lost a full quarter of their teachers in the past year. After school programs suffered the highest turnover rate of assistants (57%). Head Start had the lowest turnover rate (17%). While the nursery schools also had a low teacher turnover rate (20%), a sizeable number of assistants (31%) left the programs. Rhode Island seems to follow the national pattern, experiencing highest turnover where salaries are lowest.

The most commonly cited reasons for leaving were strikingly similar across all types of programs: dissatisfaction with the pay and benefits; acceptance of a job unrelated to the early childhood services; acceptance of a job in an elementary school or in another early childhood program; and return to school (more than half in a field unrelated to early childhood).

Staff Experience

High quality early childhood programs are in the best interest of the general public since they help children become competent learners and good citizens, reduce later school failure, and allow parents to work. The turnover within the current early childhood workforce threatens program quality and therefore the public's interest.

Staff seniority is effected by turnover. Those centers with the highest turnover rates, suffer the consequence of a relatively young and inexperienced staff. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the child care staff in after school programs has been employed with the program for less than two years. Seventy-five percent of day care employees have less than two years experience in the same center. In contrast, the majority of Head Start and nursery school staff have been with the programs for at least two years. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the teachers in nursery schools, as compared to 15% of the teachers in day care centers, have taught in the same program for more than five years. Teachers are not selecting day care settings as career paths.

The retention rate among home providers was comparatively high. Forty-three percent (43%) had been providers for over five years. Only 23% were providers for less than two years. Retention among providers' assistants was much lower. Sixty-four percent (64%) had worked with the provider for less than two years. None had been a provider's assistant for over five years.

The difficulty of finding and retaining trained staff comes at a time when the demand for child care services is growing. According to the Department for Children and Their Families, the number of fully licensed day care centers in Rhode Island grew from 153 to 190 between June 1988 and July 1989. Several additional programs are in the process of being licensed. In the same time period the number of fully certified home providers increased from 468 to 528. This count does not include homes caring for fewer than four children for which regulations do not require certification. The Department expects that the number of licensing requests will continue to grow over the next several years.

The Market Cost of Care

More research needs to be done on the **actual** cost of day care vis-a-vis the **market** rate (i.e., the rate parents are charged). The current market rate is heavily subsidized by providers who are accepting low wages and minimal or no benefits.

The data collected for this report indicate that the average annual cost of day care for RI parents was approximately $5,469 for infants, $4,783 for toddlers and $3,570 for preschoolers. For a single mother earning less than $15,000, the infant fee alone represents more than one-third (36%) of her annual gross salary.

Clearly the most significant dilemna to dealing with the staffing crisis is that it costs more money to pay teachers adequately than many parents can afford. Certain families can and must pay more for early childhood programs. But many families will be unable to afford the full cost of quality programs.

SUMMARY

As the data indicate, the child care workforce in Rhode Island is under-compensated for its skills, receive inadequate benefits and are leaving the field for better paying positions. Turnover is unacceptably high given the needs of young children for consistent and stable relationships with trained and experienced care givers. These data combined with the tremendous growth in demand for child care services describe a service profession in crisis.

The greatest barriers to creating a trained and stable workforce of providers are the low compensation, low status and poor working conditions pervasive in early childhood programs. Compensation for individuals working in early childhood programs must be commensurate with their skills and qualifications and reflect the importance and responsibilities of the work performed. A sufficient supply of high quality and stable early childhood programs cannot exist until persons who work in them are no longer forced to subsidize program costs by accepting inappropriate wages and working conditions.

It is clear that more revenue must be drawn into the field, with its primary target being the improvement of compensation and working conditions for persons who work in early childhood programs. This will require increases in public and private funding for both the families who are struggling with day care costs and the programs serving children and families.

Solutions will demand a broad coalition of consumers, providers, employers and policy makers. This report is intended to provide background for exploring initiatives that begin to address the compensation issue. The quality of Rhode Island's future workforce depends on resolution of the staffing crisis in child care services within this century.

The Rhode Island Child Care Salary Study - 1989 was produced by the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children with support from The Rhode Island Workforce 2000 Council

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